

LA SALLE

LE ~ THE LION

LA SALLE
AT THE MOUTH

LA SALLE
AT THE MOUTH
OF THE
MISSISSIPPI

THE
MURDER
OF LA SALLE

LA. SALLIE'S LANDING IN TEXAS
FROM AN OLD PRINT

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Fort Frontenac. One would be a sort of advance guard. The second would be the main body. The third would bring the bulk of the supplies. The first stage of the journey would be Fort Frontenac to the mouth of the Niagara. The second from above the falls to the mouth of the St. Joseph River, on Lake Michigan. The third from the St. Joseph to the Illinois, and the fourth from the Illinois to the mouth of the Mississippi, thence

mouth of the Mississippi. Every step was to be solid. Ports were to be built, posts established, trade opened and a regular line of communication maintained. Two ships were to carry the artisans and supplies to Niagara. Then the cannon, the anchors, the supplies and the keel of another ship were to be dragged over the twelve miles or hills up to and beyond the cataract. The third ship was to be built to sail Lake Erie, where ship number had sailed before. This ship was to carry the expedition to Lake Huron, and then to Lake Michigan.

Then to Lake Michigan. At the mouth of the St. Joseph a canon and post were to be built. Then canon anchors, supplied at the mouth of another ship, were to be transported by water and by land to the point on the Illinois. There another ship was to be built, another fort and another post established. Then La Platte was to be reached. The ship. The magnitude of the undertaking can be appreciated only when it is explained that west of Lake Ontario the largest craft afloat was a canoe. The only station the French had in the west was that of the Jesuits at Michilimackinac. Marquette had not had been to the Mississippi, but the whole vast region was a wilderness.

Whole vast region was a wilderness. With that surprising patience and care for detail that characterized his whole life, La Salle saw to the thorough equipment of his expedition before the start. Others, too, watched his preparations and studied his plans with no less care. He had been so successful in Canada and his scheme was so big that the whole province was excited. If he succeeded he would be the greatest man in the Western world. He practically would be master of the West.

But there were many who hoped he would fail. The merchants who had lost a portion of the rich fur trade through his favor with Count Fron-

the many miles of hills, was put aboard, and the vessel was safe at last. La Salle had gone back for supplies to replace those lost in the wreck. He returned without them and with a new tale of disaster. His enemies, bent on ruining him, had spread all sorts of rumors about him and all his property in Canada had been seized, although his seigniorly of Fort Frontenac was ample to pay all his obligations.

By sickness and desertion his main force had been reduced to 34. With these the Griffon spread her sails on Lake Erie on August 7, 1673, and the second stage of the journey was ended upon. For three days the Griffon sailed in glorious weather. On the fourth she entered the strait of Detroit and then Lake Huron. Then came a tempest and the Griffon nearly foundered, while all hands except the pilot prayed. He cursed the luck that brought him, a salt sea dog of a hundred hurricanes, to the disgrace

of confronting death in a fresh water lake. But the storm abated and the Griffon dropped anchor at last at Michillimackinac. Here the Jesuits made a show of welcoming LaSalle and his advance party but their friendly advance party had been tampered with. He had sent fifteen men ahead to trade and to proceed to the Illinois and make preparations for his coming. Some had decamped after squandering the goods of the mission on their journey. Michillimackinac. They were arrested. Then La Salle proceeded to Green Bay, where he found a friend in a Pottawatomie chief. Here, too, he found several of his advance party, who had remained behind and were to be put to death. He was told that

collected a large store of furs. To satisfy his creditors La Salle determined to send these furs back by the Griffon at once. The Griffon sailed on September 18, and La Salle, with fourteen men, in four canoes deeply laden with a forge, tools, merchandise and arms, resumed his journey. They were caught in the September gales, narrowly escaped drowning and then narrowly escaped starvation. It was the 1st of November when they reached the St. Joseph. Winter was setting in and the men were eager to

setting in and the men were eager to press forward before the streams froze, but La Salle was inexorable. He had sent Tonty, with twenty men, from Green Bay by land, and

At a feast the next day the Illinois chiefs were doleful. They begged La Salle not to proceed. The Mississippi was filled with ferocious monsters. There were fathomless pits, whirlpools and nameless horrors, and its shores were lined with cannibals.

frinded, astounded the chiefs by showing his full knowledge of all that had been said. They ascribed it to supernatural power, but, alas! next day the best men were gone. They had believed the stories of the Mississippi's horrors and fled. The others, too, were demoralized.

As a measure of safety La Salle moved his camp to a hill a little further down the river, fortified it, built lodgings for his men and a little chapel for the Recollet monks who accompanied the expedition. He named the place Fort Crevecoeur and started

to build the ship to sail the Mississippi. The third stage of the journey was made and he was preparing for the fourth.

Two of the men who had enlisted were shipbuilders. There was not another carpenter in the party. For amateurs to do the work meant long and tedious labor. He was worrying about the Griffon. He was worrying, too, about affairs in Montreal. He recruited and supplies and then rushed work on the new ship. To improve the time in his absence he sent Hennepin to explore the upper Mississippi.

Leaving Tonty, who had but one arm, in charge, La Salle set out on his journey. He was surrounded by his men and

has been pronounced as the most arduous ever made by a Frenchman in America. His crafty foes had set the Indians on his trial. His path was beset by peril night and day. In sixty-five days he reached Niagara and then only to learn the Griffon was lost. Indians, fur traders and Jesuits have been charged with contriving her destruction. Some reports are that she was burned, others are that she was scuttled. With the cargo that was to pay his debts, she was gone. He learned too that the fragments were

learned, too, that a ship from France freighted with almost indispensable goods for him had been wrecked in the St. Lawrence.

When he reached Fort Frontenac he

few men who had remained true to him La Salle found no trace, and, of course, he heard nothing of Hennepin. The shell of the new ship was on the stocks, but that was all that remained of Fort Crevecoeur.

Up and down the Illinois La Salle searched for Tony. He went to the Mississippi, but found no sign. La Salle next went to the mouth of the

Salle next went to the mouth of the St. Joseph, and still with no knowledge of the fate of Tony, he gathered about him some Abenakis who had fled to the West as the result of the King Philip War. He made one more trip to Canada, and on his return was overjoyed to meet Tony, who, after extraordinary perils, had reached Michilimackinac. On December 21, 1682, L. Salle left the St. Joseph. His force had been increased decidedly. He had twenty-three whites, eighteen warriors, ten squaws and three children. The warriors insisted on taking the squaws

and children. Over the portage to the Illinois they carried their canoes and down the river they floated. La Salle had given up hope of building the ship on On February 6 the ice was so thick the ship could not get out of the bay. The slipping of the muddy torrent from the Missouri impressed them greatly. Day after day they proceeded down stream camping each night on shore. Each day it got warmer. Once they were in danger of attack, but the Indians, fearing the Arkansas Indians, who had treated Joliet and Marquette in a friendly manner.

La Salle cleared a cross and took possession of the country in his King's name. Where now is the city of Natchez? La Salle planted a cross. He was amazed at the adobe houses of the Taensas Indians and the religious ceremonies of the Natchez. Soon the voyagers knew their journey's end was near. The shores became low and marshy, the water became brackish and then changed to brine. Then the alibi brought the salt of the sea. On April 6, 1682, La Salle reached a point on the great river, divided

spot where the great river divides itself into three broad channels. He followed the western one, D'Autray the east and Tony the centre. They came out on the broad and silent gulf

They built a village where Lava now stands and they rotted and died. Of 150 that landed, only forty-five remained. Early in January, 1687, La Salle, after two futile attempts to find his way back to the Mississippi, started with twenty-five men on his third attempt. For two months the party

The force was in two divisions, marching about six miles apart. One day there was a dispute between Morgane La Salle's nephew, and three of the malcontents over the disposition of some buffalo meat. That night Morgane, La Salle's servant, Saget, and his faithful Indian, Nika, were murdered as they slept.

The murderers then had to choose between fleeing to battle and being hanged for him. They laid in ambush the next morning, and when he appeared

next moment, and when he approached they shot him dead. On the prairie not far from where the Mrs. M. Sumner now stands, the greatest explorer France gave to the Western world was left to the buzzards, for the assassin stripped his body and left his bones to bleach in the Texas sun.

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